



# Place attachment as a factor of mountain farming permanence: A survey in the French Southern Alps



Leonith Hinojosa<sup>a,\*</sup>, Eric F. Lambin<sup>a,b</sup>, Naoufel Mzoughi<sup>c</sup>, Claude Napoléone<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Georges Lemaître Earth and Climate Research Centre, Earth & Life Institute, Université catholique de Louvain, Place Louis Pasteur 3, boîte L4.03.07, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

<sup>b</sup> School of Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences and Woods Institute for the Environment, Stanford University, Place Louis Pasteur 3, boîte L4.03.07, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

<sup>c</sup> INRA Ecodéveloppement, Site Agroparc - CS, 40509, 84914 Avignon Cedex 9, France

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 26 February 2016

Received in revised form 21 June 2016

Accepted 4 August 2016

Available online 18 August 2016

### Keywords:

Agricultural abandonment

Farmers

Mountain policy

Land use

## ABSTRACT

In France, agricultural land abandonment constitutes a critical issue. Mountains, in particular, are reckoned to be particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon; therefore, several policy measures attempt to maintain agricultural activities in mountains. In addition to the role of targeted subsidies in reducing abandonment of mountainous areas, we contend that place attachment helps explain the permanence of economic activity in these areas. By using survey data and controlling for several variables likely to influence place attachment, we investigated the relationship between place attachment and living in high or lower altitude mountains in a sample of livestock farmers in the French Southern Alps. Applying an ordered probit model, we found high-mountain farmers to be relatively more attached to their place compared to medium-mountain ones. Our findings also suggest that social relations at the family and neighborhood levels, satisfaction at work, and the distinctiveness farmers assign to a place are important factors of attachment. However, we found no significant association between place attachment and farm profitability. Several policy implications regarding agricultural abandonment and support for mountain livelihoods are derived.

© 2016 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

In France and several other European countries, farming abandonment in mountain regions constitutes a critical issue (NORDREGIO, 2004; Terres et al., 2015). Contributors suggest that an increasing number of farms are abandoned due to multiple factors including difficult geographical and climate conditions and distance to markets (see, for instance, Cocca et al., 2012, for Italy and Gellrich et al., 2007, for Switzerland). Nevertheless, recent counter-intuitive findings show that, notwithstanding the fact that agricultural land abandonment is widespread, it happened at lower levels in high mountains areas, where remoteness and biophysical constraints impose more difficult conditions comparatively to lower altitude medium-mountain areas (Hinojosa et al., 2016; Garde et al., 2014). Arguments used to explain this observation point out to the role of specific subsidies at both the national and European levels in supporting mountain agriculture and incentivizing high-mountain farmers to maintain their activities (Renwick et al., 2013), the likely effect of transhumance activity, environmental regulation on land use, and the presence of second home developments (Hinojosa et al., 2016).

Without negating the relevance of the aforementioned arguments, this paper contends that the relatively lower abandonment in high-mountain areas may also be explained by another factor, namely place attachment, that is, the emotional relation between an individual and a given place (Altman and Low, 1992; Stedman, 2003). Place attachment is being studied by disciplines such as sociology (e.g., Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Trentelman, 2009), human geography (e.g., Shamai, 1991), environmental psychology (e.g., Scannell and Gifford, 2010), and environmental education (e.g., Ardoin et al., 2012). These studies provide evidence to the importance of place attachment in various groups (local residents, tourists, etc.), with implications for natural resources and environmental management (Williams and Stewart, 1998; Stedman, 2003; Jorgensen and Stedman, 2006). In other words, places are important to people and place attachment may shape individuals' land use decisions.

The objective of this paper is to address the relationship between livestock farmers and place in areas deemed to present stronger constraints for economic activity, notably the mountains. The following questions framed our research: to what extent can place attachment be associated with the biophysical and social characteristics of a mountain space? Can place attachment counteract economic forces leading to land abandonment? Taking the farmers' current location as a given result of past people-environment interactions, we enquire on the factors that influence their level of place attachment. Given that recent research shows that agricultural land abandonment is relatively lower in high

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [leonith.hinojosa@uclouvain.be](mailto:leonith.hinojosa@uclouvain.be) (L. Hinojosa), [eric.lambin@uclouvain.be](mailto:eric.lambin@uclouvain.be) (E.F. Lambin), [nmzoughi@avignon.inra.fr](mailto:nmzoughi@avignon.inra.fr) (N. Mzoughi), [claudie.napoleone@avignon.inra.fr](mailto:claudie.napoleone@avignon.inra.fr) (C. Napoléone).

mountains, controlling for other variables that are likely to influence place attachment (e.g., farm profitability, social relationships), we particularly tested the hypothesis that individuals located in these areas are more likely to report higher levels of place attachment compared to their counterparts in the medium-mountain and adjacent piedmont areas.<sup>1</sup> Previous studies considered different types of places (i.e., homes, cities, or more specific places like churches and football grounds) and tested the attachment of individuals to a given place even if they did not live there, that is, regardless of actual individuals' location (see Lewicka, 2011a). This study considers attachment to the place where people live and develop their livelihoods, therefore enabling the inclusion of local-scale social and bio-physical factors that define place attachment (Trentelman, 2009), namely the municipality. The French Southern Alps being our study site, this choice is also contextual. Indeed, municipalities (*communes*) in France are historically territorial referents, densely populated areas and often of a small size (Pistre, 2012); they also represent an important aspect of social acceptance (Giblin, 2015). In this mountainous environment we carried out a survey to collect data from a sample of livestock farmers, which we used to analyse and discuss the role of place attachment in enhancing the permanence of farmers in difficult areas.

## 2. Place Attachment as a Building Concept

As part of research on human-environment interactions, scholars have developed concepts such as place, place attachment, the sense of place and the *culture du terroir* to better understand how human groups relate to their environment. These concepts have been at the core of cultural geography, behavioural and environmental psychology, sociology and environmental politics (see Lewicka, 2011a, for a review). Yet, in economics, these concepts have been insufficiently integrated (Hausmann et al., 2016). Place and environment for economists often appear as embedded terms denoting both some spatial scale where an economic phenomenon is analysed (Anguelovski and Martínez Alier, 2014) and how policy influence peoples' localization choices (e.g., Gobattoni et al., 2015). The economics of place attachment have also been overlooked, partly because of difficulties in its instrumentalization, for example at valuing its contribution to land and biodiversity conservation and the production of ecosystem services (MA, 2005; Chan et al., 2012).

In human geography and environmental psychology place attachment is broadly defined as the overall feelings, bonds, thoughts, and behavioural intentions that people develop over time in relation to their social-physical environment (Brown and Perkins, 1992). Place attachment develops over time based on factors such as residency, shared social experiences, and place-related learning (Vaughan and Ardoin 2013). Place attachment can be functional, when a resource provides amenities necessary for desired activities, or emotional, when psychological investment in a setting develops through experience over time (Oakes et al., 2016). Sometimes also referred to as 'sense of place,' place attachment is associated to rootedness, and the emotional connections with place developed by individuals over the long-term (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Anderson, 2010; Holton, 2015). However, while often used interchangeably (Hausmann et al., 2016), sense of place goes beyond the location perspective of place attachment and involves a psychological construction in relation to a place, due especially to its permanence despite high levels of residential mobility in modern society (Hay, 1998). Hence, the place-making process includes a temporality dimension, which is linked to the individuals' residential status (see also Pretty et al., 2003). Mobility in a globalized world, as Cheshire et al. (2013) suggested, decouples the individual, farming

and place. Given that places are inevitably tied to culture, geography and social relationships, different cultures naturalise 'nature' in different ways and to different ends. Therefore the sense of place can be created around geographical scales, but also around cultural ideas (Anderson, 2010). Accordingly, the significance of physical places to the development of conceptions of the self was described as the conjunction of four principles: distinctiveness (of a place), continuity (in a place), self-esteem (based on association with a place), and self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to carry out chosen activities in one's environment) (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996; Lokhorst et al., 2014).

Place attachment is also recognized as a concept that could be used to influence behaviour. For example, studies on tourism suggest a positive correlation between individual's willingness to protect a place and the meaning of that place to the individual based on its biophysical attributes (Dredge, 2010; Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Recent contributions on resilience and climate change suggest that place attachment is a crucial social-psychological variable regulating people-environment transactions (Bonnes et al., 2003; Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2014) and may support basic preventive behaviours related to environmental risk, enhancing resilience (De Dominicis et al., 2015). In environmental psychology, the transactional school of perception demonstrates that the relationship between the subject (the individual) and the object in perception (the environment) is based not on their specific characteristics but on the dynamic, reciprocal, interdependent and temporally-related processes of interactions between the two elements; therefore, both objectively environmental determinism and subjectively intra-psychic conditions and psychological phenomena can be evidenced (Castello, 2010; Steg et al. 2013). This perspective also overcomes the initial limitation observed by Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) that attachment to place mostly portrayed "place" as the social environment only, with very few references to the physical dimension of place, which limited its operationalization.

These multiple approaches to depict place and place attachment for policy and management poses difficulties (Williams, 2014) regarding how and by whom (residential occupants, visitors, tourists, or other stakeholders) place attachment is experienced. Another difficulty regards the context-sensitive governance of place, which is influenced by the scale assumed for place, i.e., neighbourhoods, landscapes, municipalities (Wilbanks, 2015) and the emphasis on social processes as drivers of place-making (Williams, 2014; Larsen, 2008). In the next section we deal with these concerns focusing on the biophysical and social factors that influence place attachment of residential occupants at the scale of municipalities.

## 3. Data and Methods

In June 2015, a survey questionnaire was sent to 1472 livestock farmers located in the French Southern Alps (Fig. 1). These farmers constitute the whole population in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region of breeders operating in medium-mountain and high-mountain areas and having >50 sheep, 25 goats or 10 cattle. Noteworthy, 601 municipalities in the study area are in a mountainous location, among which 201 municipalities are located in a "high-mountain" area and 400 in a "medium-mountain (and piedmont)" area. Mountain areas are an administrative definition based on altitude and slope: mountains municipalities have a minimum average altitude of 800 m (in the Mediterranean area); or, slopes larger than 20%.<sup>2</sup> High-mountain municipalities have a minimum altitude of 1200 m for at least 50% of the municipal area.<sup>3</sup> Before sending the questionnaire, we tested it among some experts to improve its readability. We received 310 responses

<sup>2</sup> European directive 76/401, April 6, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> The definition of a mountain area in France is ruled by Article D113–14 of the Rural and Maritime Fishing Code, following the European directive 75–268, Article 3, paragraph 3 (April 28, 1975), the successive regulation on rural development and paragraph 2 of Regulation 1305/2013.

<sup>1</sup> The classification of high-mountain and mountain municipalities done in France differentiates the piedmont areas from other mountain categories. Given the small number of adjacent piedmont municipalities in our sample, for simplicity, we considered these within the "medium-mountain" category.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5048975>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5048975>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)